



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION II

March 27, 2015

Leah Graziano
Senior Regional Representative
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
2890 Woodbridge Ave., Bldg 209B
Edison, NJ 08837

Re: Request Assistance with Epidemiologic Assessment in the Aftermath of the Methyl Bromide Release at the Sirenusa Condominium Resort, Cruz Bay, St. John, U. S. Virgin Islands (USVI)

Dear Ms. Graziano:

Request ATSDR's assistance to perform an epidemiologic assessment from the release of Methyl Bromide at the Sirenusa Condominium Resort. During this incident a toxic substance was released that caused acute human health effect. People were exposed and experienced acute health effects. We would like you to coordinate activities with USVI health officials and the USVI Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR). We are requesting that ATSDR:

- Contact residents of the condo complex that have stayed in any of the fumigated units either during or after the application of Methyl Bromide;
- Contact condo complex employees who may have worked in any fumigated units either during or after the application of Methyl Bromide;
- Contact emergency responders, law enforcement, or other personnel that may have entered treated units;
- Should provide these parties with situational awareness of the potential symptoms that may have presented as a result of exposure to Methyl Bromide;
- In questioning potentially effected persons ascertain if they have experienced any health effects consistent with Methyl Bromide exposure during the time periods outlined below;
- Determine if they have received treatment from a physician for symptoms consistent with Methyl Bromide exposure, or a documented health effect from an actual Methyl Bromide exposure; and
- Other actions necessary to complete the assessment effort.

It is possible that this assessment may extend to other areas of the USVI where Methyl Bromide may have been applied as a fumigant in a residential building. By doing this assessment, EPA hopes to determine if there were additional effects to human health or the environment, and to assist EPA in determining if additional assessment activities are needed. The assessment information supporting our response actions would also assist the Unified Command assess the impact of the release on individuals

as well as the community, target outreach to prevent similar incidents, and identify a group of exposed people that may need to be addressed.

To assist you in scoping the needed assessment effort, the following is the background and actions related to this incident. On March 20, 2015, EPA was notified of a potential chemical substance exposure that occurred in St. John, USVI. A family of four began vacationing during the week of March 16, 2015 at Sirenusa, a relatively new condominium complex within the Sirenusa Condominium Resort overlooking Cruz Bay, St. John. All four family members slowly started showing neurological symptoms of acute chemical exposure. The suspected chemical is methyl bromide, a highly toxic pesticide. On March 20, 2015, their symptoms worsened to the point that they required medical care, and they were transported to the St. Thomas Hospital. All four patients have since been transferred to stateside hospitals. The paramedic who transported the victims later noted that she had also exhibited neurological symptoms following the transport, but her symptoms lessened by the following day with over-the-counter medications and rest.

On March 22, 2015, an EPA OSC visited the condominium complex where the family had stayed, and confirmed with maintenance personnel that the family had stayed in unit on the second floor above a first-floor unit which had been fumigated with methyl bromide by an exterminator on March 18, 2015. It was suspected that the victims were in the unit for at least a portion of the time that the fumigation was conducted or that they returned to their unit shortly thereafter. The maintenance contact stated that other units in the complex had been fumigated by the same exterminator in October 2014 without incident.

On March 23, 2015, additional EPA personnel and contractors were mobilized to assist in the investigation and sampling being planned for this incident. EPA is working in coordination with government and local officials as well as ATSDR to complete an assessment of the condominium unit(s) where methyl bromide has been applied.

Subsequent to the initial response EPA has learned that several other units in this complex have been fumigated with Methyl Bromide products between October 20, 2014 and March 18, 2015. Since March 22, 2015, EPA has been conducting an assessment of the fumigated condo units. EPA has performed the following sampling tasks in both condo units: real-time air monitoring for total Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), grab air samples with summa canisters, wipe samples for pesticides, and 12-hour time-weighted average air sampling for pesticides and methyl bromide. EPA has been coordinating with all local agencies including DPNR, VI DOH, U.S. Virgin Islands Police and Fire Departments as well as ATSDR and numerous EPA programs.

If you have any questions regarding this request or would like to discuss this request further with EPA, please contact Chris Jimenez at (908) 420-4484 or myself at (732) 321-4368. I appreciate any assistance ATSDR may be able to provide.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Mosher, Chief
Response and Prevention Branch
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Region II